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William S Van Allen 04/15/2002 10:58:01 AM From DB/Inbox: William S Van Allen

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TELEGRAM

April 12, 2002

To: SECSTATE WASHDC - IMMEDIATE
Action: INR
From: AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES (BUENOS AIR 1258 - IMMEDIATE)
TAGS: OPRC, PREL, KPAO, KMDR
Captions: None
Subject: MEDIA REACTION VENEZUELA, MIDDLE EAST CRISIS- POWELL
TRIP, CUBA VOTE, ARGENTINE CRISIS-IMF 04/12/02
Ref: None

Today's key international story is the ousting of Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez by a civilian-military coup following a protest of half a million demonstrators which ended in a bloody crackdown. The Middle East crisis, with Secretary Powell's trip to Jerusalem on a crucial mission aimed at ending more than 18 months of bloodshed, is also widely played. In the domestic field, the future vote on Cuba at the UNHRC -- with Cuba rejecting a U.S.-backed proposal from Latin American nations to send a human rights monitor to the island and Argentina's vote on a softened proposal on Cuba in the up-coming UNHRC, (where Argentina backs a Uruguayan-sponsored motion 'inviting' Cuba to attain in the human, civil and political rights fields achievements similar to those attained in the social rights field), keeps garnering media attention. IMF negotiations and the provinces' support to budget cuts also get sustained coverage.

1. SAMPLE HEADLINES

- Liberal, English-language "Buenos Aires Herald" (04/12) "Chavez 'Ousted'." "Top Brass Tells Chavez to Quit." "Middle East: Powell's Turn." "War Crimes: Court Ratified." "Havana Rejects Rights Monitors." "Argentine Congress Tells Government 'Don't Vote Against Cuba.'" "Colombia: Rebels Abduct 12 Legislators." "Argentine Provinces Support Talks with IMF."

- Daily-of-record "La Nacion" (04/12) "Chaos in Venezuela: At Least 15 Dead and 100 Wounded on the Streets of Caracas." "Chavez, a 'Revolutionary' Cornered by his Own Weapons." "Sharon Challenges Powell and Says He'll Not Stop His Offensive." "Provincial Governors Accept Budget Cuts." "IMF Wants More Changes in Bankruptcy Law." "Mrs. Duhalde in Washington Requests Solidarity for Argentina." "Rio Pact: Good Offices with IMF in Support of Argentina."

- Leading "Clarín" (04/12) "Friars Fear Imminent Attack on Bethlehem Chapel." Tunisia: Confusing Explosion at Synagogue: Israel Says it's a Terrorist Attack." "Duhalde's U.S. Consultants Trigger Problems in Washington: At Odds With Argentine Embassy."

2. OPINION PIECES

- "Washington Fears for the Region"

Jorge Rosales, daily-of-record "La Nacion" Washington-based correspondent, writes (04/12) "The social and

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEW AUTHORITY: JOHN L MILLS
DATE/CASE ID: 27 APR 2006 200304421

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political outburst that worsened Venezuela's crisis places the future of the region in a complicated position of instability and pessimism, according to several U.S. specialists on Latin American issues who view the situation with deep concern.

"State Department spokesperson Eliza Koch said last night that the Republican administration urges 'all sectors to moderate their rhetoric, begin a genuine dialogue, respect political rights and avoid violence,' and added 'we urge the opposition to behave in a responsible manner and reject any unconstitutional or non-democratic attempt from any sector.'

"Georgetown professor Arturo Valenzuela said that Venezuela's crisis is worse than the situation Ecuador and Argentina went through....

"Peter Hakim, of Inter-American Dialogue, expressed 'Latin America's future is not very optimistic because Venezuela's explosion adds to Argentina's deep crisis and Colombia's serious problems.' Hakim also pointed out that Latin America's future is 'terrible' because the U.S. is 'pondering its future steps in Colombia; has taken distance from Argentina and has no plan for Venezuela.' But he concluded that the Bush administration will end up protecting Venezuela's democracy, although this may mean turning its back on Chavez. 'The U.S. must try to support the region so there's stabilization. Latin America's future is under great threat because Venezuela, Colombia and Argentina are deteriorating,' said the expert."

- "Anatomy of a Suicide"

Claudio Uriarte, leftist "Pagina 12" international

analyst, opines (04/12) "What took place in Venezuela yesterday is the end of a strange political cycle where too little was what it seemed to be. In the opinion of Chavez' detractors, the former paratrooper colonel was guilty of subjecting his country to a Communist tyranny, of suppressing liberties, fighting free enterprise, politicizing the army, censoring the press, humiliating the Church and oppressing workers. In fact, the only thing he did was fight all these sectors, until his social base was destroyed: the masses that came down on Caracas and left a tribute of between 10 and 30 dead bodies, can't all come from the high classes, or Chavez wouldn't find himself at the end of the game as he did last night. In fact, what ended Chavez was a combination of a strong confrontational style with absolute government inertia. In other words, he never did anything....

"Chavez left the stage in the same way he appeared on it: amidst a bloodbath."

- "Historic Creation of International Criminal Court"

Alberto Armendariz, daily-of-record "La Nacion" political columnist, writes from New York, (04/12) "Yesterday, at UN Headquarters in New York, international justice took a gigantic step forward ... with the ratification by ten more States of the International Criminal Court, the first permanent global court to try the world's most heinous crimes against Humanity, genocide and war crimes.

"We have cast a decisive blow on impunity," said UN Secretary General Kofi Annan.

".... The difference with The Hague's International Justice Court is that the latter solves disputes between States, not between individuals.

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".... There are still important States which have not ratified or even signed the treaty: such as the U.S., Russia and China... U.S. opposition has been remarkable. President Bill Clinton signed the treaty the last day of his administration (December 31, 2000,) but the present administration refuses to ratify it out of fear that U.S. citizens may be tried in other countries without authorization of the U.S. government.

"Last week, Bush's government even debated a 'possible deletion' of the signature, an unprecedented measure in international justice.

"The U.S. is the country with the largest number of soldiers outside its own territory and fears that their participation in armed conflicts will be under the scrutiny of international justice...."

3. EDITORIALS

"Guilt by Association"

An editorial in Liberal, English-language "Buenos Aires Herald" reads (04/11) ".... As they grope towards an agreement, the GOA and Singh's IMF team respectively gauge success by how much money they can wrest from the IMF and how many concessions they can wrest from Argentina but, whatever the agreement finally reached, it is creating a linkage which turns both sides into losers. No matter how worthwhile the reforms emerging from these talks, they are going to be perceived by much of public opinion as an unacceptable sacrifice of national sovereignty instead of something which Argentina should be doing anyway, with or without the IMF. In seeking policy corrections as a condition for aid..., the IMF risks converting other people's mistakes into its own....

"Any negotiations based on grudging concessions and empty promises cannot be more than a stopgap -- even if the IMF's record were far more glorious than it is, it becomes impossible to help any country which does not want to help itself...."

WALSH

Additional Addressees:

None

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